



Follow-up Community Workshop Summary/Questions/Report-Out:

Single-Family Home & Tree Regulation Updates

Background

On December 7, 2015, the City held a Follow-up Community Outreach Workshop for the Single-Family Home & Tree Regulation Updates project at Belmont City Hall. Over 70 members of the Belmont community came to share their perspectives on the potential regulation updates.

After a brief presentation on the update purpose and process, attendees participated in small group discussion to address topic areas using specific follow-up questions designed to confirm previous input related to single family house size, parking, house design & neighborhood “fit”, secondary dwelling units, trees, and improving the Single Family Design Review process. The small groups then reported their thoughts and suggestions for the potential regulation updates to the larger group. The groups’ responses were aggregated by topic area, and are provided below.

1. ***Single Family House Size (11/18/15 Summary)***

- Maximum of 5,000 square feet with a sliding scale incorporating lot size and slope to reduce the maximum size, as appropriate.
- Add more flexibility for unusual cases.
- Need neighbor input if significant impacts could occur.
- Also, use daylight plane and building envelope plane, and consider topography and architectural design.
- Don’t count garage space in floor area.
- Setbacks should be used to address this issue.

While only a small number of new homes have been proposed at the current limit, increasing the maximum, with a sliding scale and other refinements as proposed, seems to make sense. Do you concur? Any additional concerns?

Group Responses (12/7/15 Meeting)

- Use a sliding scale, incorporating lot size and slope
- Maintain current 3,500-4,500 sq. ft. floor area maximum; allow larger homes via a revised floor area exception process
- Establish floor area maximums by neighborhood
- Consider additional setbacks, daylight planes and second story step-backs for larger homes
- A home size of 5,000 sq. ft. is too big; homes should be no larger than 4,000 sq. ft.
- A 5,000 sq. ft. home is fine, if garage excluded
- If the existing floor area ratio (FAR) and slope table is to be re-examined, than it should only be as part of a stand-alone, citywide process
- Keep the same floor area limits
- Add more detail to the website related to this issue



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- Don't count garage in FAR
- The existing FAR limitations need adjustment
- The time at the Community Meetings is too short to review the questions; one item should be covered at a time
- Website comments disappear after they are entered; the city should consider posting comments on a website bulletin board for all to see with the possibility of accommodating threaded conversations
- More quantitative data is needed to evaluate this issue
- Parking and traffic issues may result from allowing larger homes
- Reduce the maximum floor area for small lots
- Base the maximum floor area on slope
- A larger floor area cap of up to 5,000 sq. ft. using a sliding scale for lot size is fine
- Keep the existing cap; define a better floor area exception process instead
- Do not change the floor area cap
- At community meetings there should be a way for the public to raise issues and make proposals beyond the six topics on the agenda
- The community meetings should have been longer to fully discuss all topics and for everyone to be heard
- In determining a floor area cap, consider lot size, neighborhood fit, and potential impacts
- More information is needed on how a floor area sliding scale would work
- It is okay to raise the floor area caps
- Floor area caps should be neighborhood specific
- The FAR table should be considered by neighborhood
- In considering a floor area cap address the potential infrastructure improvements that may be needed for larger homes
- The floor area cap should be a sliding scale based on lot size



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2. **House Design and Neighborhood “Fit” (11/18/15 Summary).**

- Yes for additional standards for setbacks and for nonconforming provisions.
- Nonconforming additions only towards the back: OK as long as following line of house but not OK for second story; step it back.
- Some didn’t like decks, porches, etc. projecting into yards.
- No flexibility for going up with nonconforming setbacks.
- Respond to desire that homes fit in their neighborhoods.
- Concerns about enforcement of design and overregulation.

Community input on November 18th seemed to support additional standards to regulate bulk and mass. There was also support to allow additions on nonconforming homes to follow existing side setbacks, but not for upper-stories. Is this the right direction to go? Any refinements?

Group Responses (12/7/15 Meeting)

- Objective standards are needed for review of new homes and large additions
- Agreed with bullet points under the house design and neighborhood fit category
- Older homes should be grandfathered and allowed to expand with existing setbacks
- New additions should meet current setback requirements
- A side setback of five feet is adequate
- Objective development standards are needed
- Extension of non-conforming side yard setbacks are okay on the first floor, but the second floor should be stepped back
- Daylight planes should be used to evaluate bulk and protect views
- Deck and porch encroachments should be allowed as long as a view is not lost
- It is not over-regulation to enforce the codes
- Safety needs to be considered for allowing extensions to nonconforming side setbacks
- Evaluation of bulk needs to consider design uniqueness and neighborhood character



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3. **Parking (11/18/15 Summary).**

- Most wanted garages for new homes.
- Many OK with carports for existing homes; others against.
- Consensus: need to provide exceptions for older homes with one car garages.
- Same size garages are unreasonable; base rule on home size; 20' x 20' is too large for smaller homes and in some areas.
- Do not penalize owners for adding rooms; use average number of cars people own as opposed to number of bedrooms and base rule on square footage of house and/or lot size.
- Count all legal parking spaces – covered or uncovered.
- Second units should trigger more parking on-site.

While no clear consensus emerged, a more nuanced approach to off-street parking seems needed, with recognition of existing homes with one-car garages and standards based on likely car ownership, not just a bedroom count. Do you support these suggestions?

Group Responses (12/7/15 Meeting)

- Exceptions should be made to allow additions to older homes with one-car garages
- Additional off-street parking should be provided for a second unit
- Garages should be required for new homes, but not existing homes where space can be a problem
- Consider the use of parking permits to get cars off street
- Getting cars off streets should be the main goal
- Do not set a minimum garage size standard – allow use of existing small garages
- Parking requirements should be neighborhood specific
- There needs to be more flexibility in the parking standards for upgrades
- New homes should have garage
- Covered parking should not be a requirement; all parking spaces should count
- Provide parking for large upgrades, unless a design or site constraint hardship exists
- Carports are not attractive
- There should be no requirement for covered parking for upgrades to existing homes
- No RVs and boats should be parked in public view
- Allow additional parking in the front yard, provided that the parking spaces are permeable
- The proposed changes to the parking standards are good; the focus should be on the total number of parking spaces – not whether they are covered or uncovered
- New home construction should require two covered and two uncovered spaces; cars should not overhang onto the pavement (sidewalk and street)



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- Parking should be based on legal bedrooms only, not on walk-in closets and other areas that are clearly not going to be used as a bedroom
- There should be a total of three parking spaces required (either covered or not covered); covered parking should be either a garage or a carport
- There should be additional parking for second units
- There needs to be more flexibility built into the parking standards - Tandem is fine
- An on-street parking permit system should be considered
- There needs to be nuances built into the parking standards for small homes; big garages should not be required in all situations
- Three parking spaces is adequate
- It should be okay to expand a home with a single car garage

4. **Trees (11/18/15 Summary).**

- Rules should treat maintenance and development the same (new construction resulting in a loss of a tree).
- Allow removal of diseased trees; don't charge at all.
- Allow thinning of trees within a lot, not visible from the street.
- Protect native, healthy trees and large trees at 24" DBH; don't limit to heritage trees only.
- Simpler ordinance; 1:1 replacement.
- People should engage neighbors more if a tree that crosses a lot line needs to be removed (mediation concept).

The consensus seems to be to make the rules more straightforward, with more reasonable fees, but also greater protection for native trees, healthy trees and large trees throughout the community. Are there additional changes that should be considered?

Group Responses (12/7/15 Meeting)

- Agreed with all of the bullet points under the trees section
- The cost of tree removal is unreasonable
- Some additional tree species should be protected
- Tree replanting standards should require the replacement of the same size tree canopy as the tree being removed
- There should be a 2:1 tree replacement to removal ratio
- Tree removal should be free for diseased trees
- The standards for tree removal for development should be the same as for maintenance
- There should be a 1:1 tree replacement to removal ratio



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- Redwood City has a good tree protection system; Belmont should emulate it
- A tree protection classification at 24" DBH is too large; it should be lower
- Tree removal should be free for sick trees
- Toyon trees should be added to the list of Heritage Trees
- The tree removal process should be relaxed for certain types of trees
- There should be consideration given to the number of trees on the lot
- Monterey pines should be added to the list of Heritage Trees
- A 3 to 1 replacement ratio is unreasonable – use a 1 to 1 ratio
- The fees for maintenance tree removals should be eliminated
- Allow dangerous and undesirable trees to be removed without undue penalty
- For replanting, consider number of trees already on the property and space available for more trees

5. **Second Units (11/18/15 Summary).**

- Some OK with reduction to 1,000 sq. ft.; others prefer 640 or 670 sq. ft. maximum or base on lot size.
- If a second unit is added within existing envelope, it shouldn't matter – no limit on square footage should be set for these units.
- Size of unit: index according to FAR; no maximum size.
- CUP for units on lots less than 5,000 sq. ft.
- Don't need to reduce max; no cap.

A total of 4 second units have been built since 2008, and only 2 units per year are anticipated over the coming 8 years. Most of those at the last workshop seemed to support the reduction of second unit size to 1,000 sq. ft., but not limiting second unit size for units that are wholly within a home. Is this still correct?

Group Responses (12/7/15 Meeting)

- Some growth in second unit construction is okay
- Bigger second units are not better
- Do not reduce the maximum size for second units
- Smaller units should be considered, not bigger
- Keep design review for second units
- There is not enough information on population increases that may result from more second units
- Second unit regulations should be rational
- Limit second units to 640 sq. ft. attached and 399 sq. ft. detached
- A 620 or 670 sq. ft. second unit is too small; a 1,000 sq. ft. second unit should be allowed
- Do not allow duplexes; consider small in-law units only



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- Allow second units of any size provided that they meet FAR requirements
- Consider the traffic and parking impacts of second units
- A second unit up to 40% of the size of the main unit is okay
- Keep a 640 sq. ft. limitation on second units, and do not distinguish between attached/detached units as it relates to a Conditional Use Permit
- A sliding scale based on lot size for second units should be considered

6. **Single Family Design Review – Improving the Process (11/18/15 Summary).**

- General support for the proposed “tiered approach” with neighborhood notification and the Planning Commission retaining jurisdiction over larger projects.
- Need more predictability; the approval process shouldn’t take so long.
- Some advocated abolishing design review and to hold people to specific understandable standards.

Most of those reporting out at workshop seemed to favor the tiered approach to single family design review, with some refinements to account for lot size or location within the community. Are these the right modifications to make, or are there others?

Group Responses (12/7/15 Meeting)

- A tiered process would be beneficial
- Neighbors should be noticed if there will be impacts from construction
- Some of the larger tier 2 projects should go to the Planning Commission
- The tier system should include clear standards
- There should be no limit on community meeting length; more time is needed to discuss issues
- Need flexibility in tiers to address neighborhood character
- The process shouldn’t take so long
- In favor of the tiered approach
- In favor of tiered review
- Neighbor notification should occur if there will be project impacts